

SPOT RESOLUTIONS

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CONGRESSMAN

71.2009 025.04021

Abraham Lincoln's Political Career through 1860

Spot Resolutions

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 855

Fort Wayne, Indiana

August 27, 1945

THE SPOT RESOLUTIONS

The episode which has caused more comment than any other incident during Lincoln's term in Congress is his presentation of the "Spot Resolutions," and they were presented at the very beginning of the first session.

Lincoln was elected to the lower house of Congress in August 1846, three months before the war with Mexico broke out. His term of office did not begin until the winter session of 1847-1848, so he had more than a years interval before leaving for Washington. He was in Springfield nearly all of the time while the State Legislature which began in December 1846 was in session, and as congressmen would naturally be interested in the measures presented to the body.

The Whigs had opposed entering the war with Mexico, and now that it was under way, almost the entire Whig block refused to support a resolution in the legislature stating that the war had been started by Mexico. Lincoln was in agreement with this position of the Whigs in the Illinois Legislature when he left for Washington and his viewpoint was in harmony with the majority of his political associates in Illinois.

Lincoln and his family enroute to the Capitol in November 1847 stopped with his wife's people at Lexington, Kentucky for three weeks, at a time when Henry Clay was in retirement at his home in the city. There can be no question but what Lincoln was in the audience as a special guest when Clay, on November 13, gave one of the most remarkable speeches of his life, choosing as his subject, "The Mexican War." He discussed the causes which had brought on the war and then concluded, "Thus the war commenced; and the President (Polk) after having produced it, appealed to Congress. . . . A preamble was inserted, falsely attributing the commencement of the war to the act of Mexico." Clay concluded his speech by the presentation of eight resolutions.

A little over a week after Clay made his speech the Lincolns left Lexington for Washington, and a little over a month after the speech on the Mexican War was delivered by Clay, Lincoln presented the "Spot Resolutions" before Congress. When Lincoln read the resolutions he had been a member of the House but two weeks and it was an auspicious introduction indeed for the "Lone Whig from Illinois." Clay had presented eight resolutions at Lexington on the Mexico situation and Lincoln included eight resolutions in his appeal. At the time Lincoln read his "Spot Resolutions" Clay was in Washington and remained there most of the winter.

While students of Lincoln often refer to the resolutions the verbatim contents of them are not so well-known. Both the preamble and the resolutions follow:

"Whereas the President of the United States, in his message of May 11, 1846, has declared that 'the Mexican government not only refused to receive him' (the envoy of the United States) 'or listen to his propositions, but, after a long continued series of menaces, have at last invaded our territory, and shed the blood of our fellow-citizens on our own soil:'"

"And again, in his message of December 8, 1846, that 'we had ample cause of war against Mexico, long before the breaking out of hostilities; but even then we forbore to take redress into our own hands, until Mexico herself became the aggressor, by invading our soil in hostile array, and shedding the blood of our citizens:'"

"And yet again, in his message of December 7, 1847, that 'the Mexican government refused even to hear the

terms of adjustment which he' (our minister of peace) 'was authorized to propose; and finally, under wholly unjustifiable pretexts, involved the two countries in war, by invading the territory of the State of Texas, striking the first blow, and shedding the blood of our citizens on our own soil.'

"And whereas this House desires to obtain a full knowledge of all the facts which go to establish whether the particular spot of soil on which the blood of our citizens was so shed was, or was not, our own soil, at that time: therefore,

"Resolved, by the House of Representatives, That the President of the United States be respectfully requested to inform this House,

"First. Whether the spot of soil on which the blood of our citizens was shed, as in his messages declared, was, or was not, within the territories of Spain, at least from the treaty of 1819 until the Mexican revolution.

"Second. Whether that spot is, or is not, within the territory which was wrested from Spain by the Mexican revolution.

"Third. Whether that spot is, or is not, within a settlement of people, which settlement had existed ever since long before the Texas revolution, until its inhabitants fled from the approach of the United States army.

"Fourth. Whether that settlement is, or is not, isolated from any and all other settlements, by the Gulf of Mexico and the Rio Grande on the south and west, and by wide uninhabited regions on the north and east.

"Fifth. Whether the people of that settlement, or a majority of them, or any of them, had ever, previous to the bloodshed mentioned in his message, submitted themselves to the government or laws of Texas, or of the United States, by consent, or by compulsion, either by accepting office, or voting at elections, or paying taxes, or serving on juries; or having process served upon them, or in any other way.

"Sixth. Whether the people of that settlement did, or did not, flee from the approach of the United States army, leaving unprotected their homes and their growing crops, before the blood was shed, as in his messages stated; and whether the first blood so shed was, or was not, shed within the inclosure of the people, or some of them, who had thus fled from it.

"Seventh. Whether our citizens, whose blood was shed, as in his messages declared, were, or were not, at that time, armed officers and soldiers, sent into that settlement by the military order of the President, through the Secretary of War; and,

"Eighth. Whether the military force of the United States, including those citizens, was, or was not, so sent into that settlement after General Taylor had, more than once, intimated to the War Department that, in his opinion, no such movement was necessary to the defence or protection of Texas."

The fact that Lincoln's law partner differed from him on the Mexico question and has elaborated in the Herndon volumes on Lincoln's failure to comprehend the real issues involved, has led many historians to believe that the congressman from Illinois went into political eclipse by taking the position he did in the "Spot Resolutions." It should be observed, however, that he followed the lead of Clay, represented the opinions advanced by the Whigs in the Illinois Legislature, and adhered to the almost unanimous view of the Whigs in Congress.

1849—Lincoln Thought It Was Ended

BY ERNEST TUCKER

FOR A long time, Abe had had ambitions to go to Congress, and he finally made it in 1847. He became Rep. Lincoln, Whig, from Illinois. He packed up his family and took them to Washington.

Nobody noticed. The Lincolns settled down in rented rooms. The freshman congressman was appointed to the Post Office Committee, a political backwater. He spent much of his time sitting around swapping yarns with his cronies.

The brilliant social life of Washington was not for the Lincolns. A new congressman, then as now, was a nonentity, especially a new congressman from a backwater state such as Illinois.

★ ★ ★

ABE USED to sing a doleful ballad extolling the virtues of his home state:

*"Way down upon the Wabash, such land was
never known;*

*"If Adam could have seen it, he'd claim it for
his own;*

*"He'd think it was the garden he'd played in as
a boy,*

*"And straightway call it Eden, in the state of
El-a-noy."*

Nobody took him seriously. Illinois was a muddy



morass. Abe got a tiny reputation as a teller of tall tales, but his influence on the course of history was nil.

★ ★ ★

THEN, AFTER a while, he began to make himself unpopular. The Mexican War was going on, and the country was in the throes of war fever.

The U. S. was flexing its muscles. Speaking against the war was unpopular, and Lincoln spoke against the war. He introduced what came to be known as the "Spot Resolutions," demanding an investigation to find out on what exact spot American blood had first been spilled.

He believed it an unjust war and thought the investigation would prove it so.

He began to get letters from his constituents in

Illinois. Almost without exception, they opposed his stand. Illinoisans took their politics seriously. They did not want to have a man representing them who stood up in Congress, day after day, and called the U. S. an aggressor.

There were newspaper editorials. The number of letters mounted. Lincoln continued to speak.

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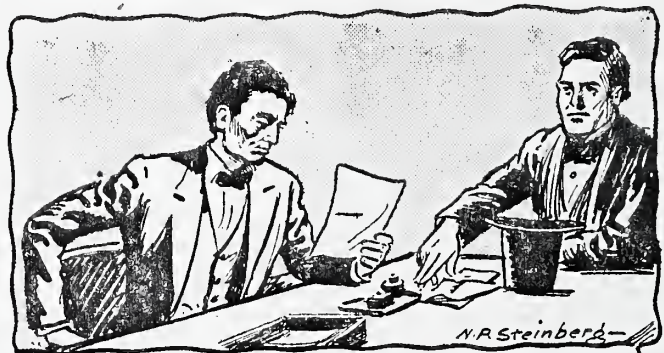
HIS LAW partner, Billy Herndon, wrote, imploring him to stop his attacks on national policy. If he couldn't agree, Herndon wrote, at least keep still.

"I cannot be silent," Lincoln wrote back. "I must speak." His conscience would not let him pursue any other course than the one he was following.

"Blackleg," they called him, "traitor," and a host of other names. He went on speaking as his conscience told him.

The end of his term drew near. Obviously, he could not be reelected. The Whig party was dying, and so was Lincoln's career. He made a few political speeches, without much effect.

His term expired. Lincoln was not even renominated. The Mexican War was over. Already, across the national capital, were falling the shadows of another and greater war to come. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery champions thundered at each other in the Senate and House.



The Lincolns packed up and left Washington. Nobody noticed.

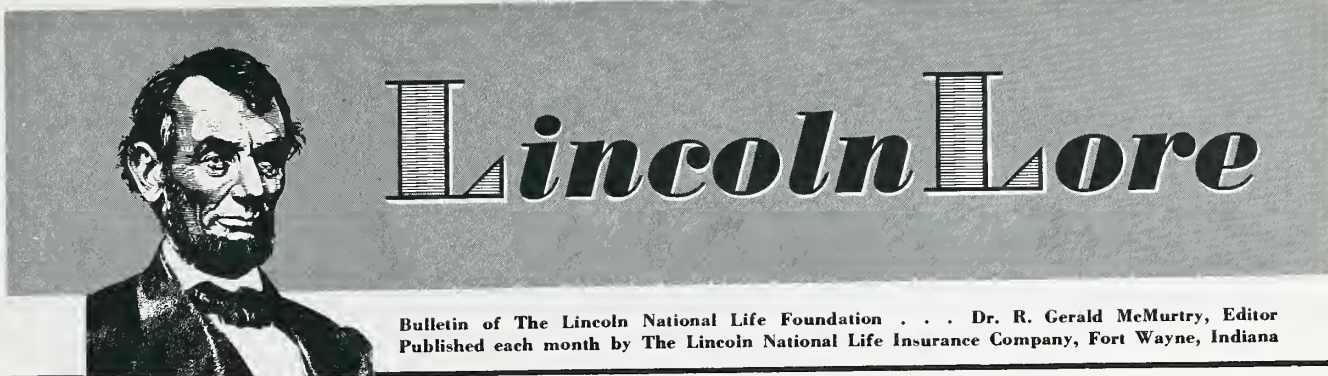
★ ★ ★

HE WAS offered the governorship of the new territory of Oregon, and considered it for a while, but turned it down. What would have happened if—but that is idle speculation.

He didn't go to Oregon. He returned to Springfield and hung out his shingle: A. Lincoln, Attorney at Law.

He had had his chance at greatness; he had not been in tune with the times, and could not compromise his principles. He was repudiated, and looked forward to the life of a small-town lawyer in a frontier state.

It was 1849. Lincoln had 16 years to live.



Number 1560

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February 1968

The Spot Resolutions

The October 6, 1967 issue of *Time* magazine contains an article entitled "Divided We Stand: The Unpopularity of U.S. Wars." In a section entitled "Mexican War" Daniel Webster is said to have declared that conflict to be "A war of pretexts — a pretext that Mexico had invaded U.S. territory, a pretext that Mexico had declined to receive a U.S. emissary, a pretext that Mexico had refused to pay just U.S. claims." Webster suggested James K. Polk's impeachment for involving the United States in a war without congressional consent, and Abraham Lincoln (a one term Whig Congressman from Illinois) like many other Americans "suspected that United States troops had provoked the incident inside Mexico."

Like Webster, Henry Clay, and other prominent Whigs, Lincoln embarked upon a plan of action on December 22, 1847 by offering in the United States House of Representatives what are known as the "Spot" Resolutions. These resolutions are an attack on the President's messages of May 11th, December 7th and 8th when Polk accused the Mexican government of, among other things, "invading our territory (sic), and shed (shedding) the blood of our fellow citizens on our own soil." Lincoln offered a preamble and a series of eight resolutions which is probably the most obscure public effort of all of his actions as a politician, law maker and statesman. Several years ago, when T. V. quiz shows were in vogue, the Spot Resolutions constituted a favorite "sixty-four dollar" question.

Because of their length, the Spot Resolutions are not given here (except the First, Second, Third and Fifth), but can be found on pages 420-422 in volume I of *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. A note by the editor of the *Works* indicates that the resolutions as printed in the *Congressional Globe* were considerably altered from Lincoln's original. However, Lincoln's original draft is followed in detail in the *Collected Works*.

SPEECH
OF
MR. LINCOLN, OF ILLINOIS,
ON THE REFERENCE OF THE
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE,
IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14, 1848.

WASHINGTON:
J. & G. S. GIDEON, PRINTERS.
1848.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

This speech, delivered by Abraham Lincoln on January 12, 1848 containing arguments favoring the "Spot Resolutions," is incorrectly dated January 14, 1848 (M.4).

the Spot Resolutions and his denunciation of the President (January 12, 1848).

Immediately before taking his seat in Congress Lincoln had given a lot of thought to the question of war guilt, especially after listening, on November 13, 1847, to Henry Clay's eloquent speech (which embodied eight resolutions) at Lexington, Kentucky, on the causes of the Mexican conflict. Then, too, it had become the national Whig party line to accuse the Democratic President of

Lincoln's First, Second and Third resolutions have reference to the "spot."

First: Whether the spot of soil on which the blood of our citizens was shed, as in his messages declared, was, or was not, within the territories (sic) of Spain, at least from the treaty of 1819 until the Mexican revolution.

Second: Whether that spot is, or is not, within the territory which was wrested from Spain, by the Mexican revolution.

Third: Whether that spot is, or is not, within a settlement of people, which settlement had existed ever since long before the Texas revolution, until its inhabitants fled from the approach of the U.S. Army.

These resolutions implied that the "spot" was an isolated area never acquired by the United States and that the President's statement justifying the war was the "sheerest deception."

Lincoln had written William H. Herndon in Springfield, Illinois, on December 13, 1847 stating, among other things, that "As you are all so anxious for me to distinguish myself, I have concluded to do so, before long." His plan of action followed with the Spot Resolutions (December 22, 1847), his vote for the resolutions of the Whig Congressman, George Ashmun of Massachusetts, declaring that the war had been "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally," begun by Polk (January 3, 1848) and his speech in the House containing arguments favoring

provoking the hostilities. According to Reinhard H. Luthin, author of *The Real Abraham Lincoln*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960, this charge against the Whig party has been confirmed as a political maneuver by scholarly historians. Needless to state, this new political stance of Lincoln's was not to the satisfaction of some of his constituents back home, even though some of them may have agreed with him before he left for Washington.

When Lincoln campaigned for Congress he did not publicly oppose the Mexican War; on one occasion he participated in a war recruitment rally. Lincoln was elected to the lower house of Congress on August 3rd, 1846, almost three months after the Mexican War was declared (May 13, 1846), and his term of office did not begin until the winter session of 1847-1848, so he had more than a year's interval before going to Washington. It is, of course, to be assumed that Lincoln carefully followed the activities of the national legislative body while he was a Congressman-elect. Certainly, he had had ample time to reach some mature and definite conclusions about the causes of the Mexican War.

When Lincoln took his seat on December 6, 1847, all of the battles of the war had been fought and peace negotiations were to be culminated with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. In later years Lincoln was always careful to assert that he supported the supply bills and measures favorable to officers, soldiers and their families.

Perhaps the most scholarly and detailed study of the Spot Resolutions has been undertaken by Donald W. Riddle in his book *Congressman Abraham Lincoln*, University of Illinois Press, 1957, pages 56-69. This author is of the opinion that the crux of the Spot Resolutions was the Fifth resolution:

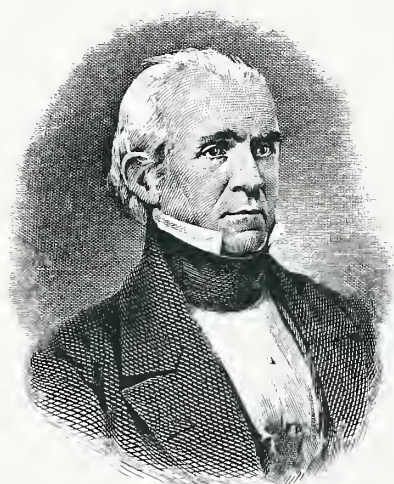
Fifth: Whether the people of that settlement, or a majority of them, or any of them, had ever, previous to the bloodshed, mentioned in his messages, submitted themselves to the government as laws of Texas, or of the United States, by consent, or by compulsion, either by accepting office, or voting at elections, or paying taxes, or serving on juries, or having process served upon them, or in any other way.

Answering Lincoln's assertions, point by point, Riddle's conclusions are that the war was not unconstitutionally begun by the President, and that Polk acted in accordance with the correct interpretation of the Constitution. Riddle further states: "However, it was a debatable question when Lincoln was in Congress. Lincoln cannot be convicted of error because the later development, which has made the fact indisputable, had not then occurred."

Riddle had defined Lincoln's party's Mexican War position in Congress by quoting a statement by Justin Smith to the effect that the Whigs "denounced the war enough to incriminate themselves when they supported it, and they supported it enough to stultify themselves when they condemned it."

Certainly, no one should question Lincoln's right to criticize administration policies in wartime or in peacetime, but the Spot Resolutions, his vote for the Ashmun resolutions and his speech of January 12, 1848 must be appraised as being purely political to aid the Whig party in coming elections. Such tactics were not unique then and are not unique today. The upshot of Lincoln's political actions was that some of Lincoln's Whig constituents were offended as well as the Illinois Democrats. Lincoln had made a mistake in his estimate of a political situation.

Some of the people of Illinois reacted violently to Lincoln's Anti-Mexican War attitude, and particularly the Spot Resolutions, even though they were just read to the Thirtieth Congress, First Session, and then laid upon the table. Albert J. Beveridge in his book *Abraham Lin-*



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

JAMES K. POLK

Although today considered among the near-great of the Presidents of the United States, James K. Polk was not a leader of public opinion in the years 1845 to 1849 when he served as the 11th President.

coln 1809-1858, Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1928, volume I, pages 428-433, gave considerable space in his book to Lincoln's so-called political blunder. This topic has also been thoroughly treated in the Riddle book.

While Polk never mentioned Lincoln or his resolutions in his voluminous diary (four volumes) and little notice was taken in Washington political circles of the Whig Congressman's attack on the Administration, there was one exception in the form of a severe tongue lashing by Congressman John Jameson of Missouri:

"Strange position before the American Congress for such a Representative; the representative of a district which sent Hardin who fell at Buena Vista, and Baker who, in the bloody battle, and at Cerro Gordo commanded when the noble Shields fell with a grape (shot)

through his lungs."

In fact, Beveridge made the statement in a note (vol. I, page 428) that "Existing papers of no member of Congress while Lincoln was in the House made any mention of Lincoln's speech (January 12, 1848) or, indeed of Lincoln himself, so far as the author has seen them." Because Lincoln's stand was not different from that of the Whig party leaders, the Washington newspapers ignored the attack and even Lincoln's political colleagues from Illinois did not mention the resolutions or the speech in their letters to party affiliates when they wrote of the political situation.

According to Beveridge, Lincoln's action in Congress was not mentioned by Illinois Congressman John A. McClernand who was a kind of correspondent for the Springfield Democratic paper: "Neither did Winthrop, nor Ashmun, nor Giddings, nor Toombs, nor Stephens, nor any Whig leader, whether from the North or the South mention Lincoln as an anti-war agitator in the early months of 1848.

But Herndon, back in Springfield, was upset, and he forthrightly expressed his fears to Lincoln in a letter dated January 19, 1848. Lincoln replied from Washington on February 1st and wrote specifically about his vote for the Ashmun amendment: "... you fear that you and I disagree about the war. I regret this, not because of any fear we shall remain disagreed, after you shall have read this letter, but because, if you misunderstand, I fear other good friends will also. That vote affirms that the war was unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President; and I will stake my life that if you had been in my place, you would have voted just as I did. Would you have voted what you felt you knew to be a lie? I know you would not. Would you have gone out of the House — skulked the vote? I expect not. If you had skulked one vote, you would have had to skulk many more, before the end of the session ... You are compelled to speak; and your only alternative is to tell the truth or tell a lie. I can not doubt which you would do."

But Herndon was so concerned over his law partner's political future that he wrote him again on January 29th. The gist of the second Herndon letter was that the President could in a defensive war invade the enemy's country. Lincoln replied on February 15th, taking up the Constitutional argument. He wrote: "Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him to do so, whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such purpose — and you allow him to make war at pleasure ... The provision of the Constitution giving the war-making power to Congress, was dictated, as I understand it, by the following reasons. Kings had always been involving and impoverishing their people in wars, pretending generally, if not always, that the good of the people was the object. This, our Convention understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly op-

pressions; and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that *no one man* should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us. But your view destroys the whole matter, and places our President where Kings have always stood."

Some of Lincoln's Illinois friends apparently would not buy his argument and their reaction was immediately vociferous. They had not expected their Congressman to oppose the war. An editorial that appeared in the *Illinois State Register* entitled "Out Damned Spot" stated that Lincoln had made his *debut* in Congress by an assault on the war. The issues finally led to a newspaper war between the political parties, and the Democratic party in some Illinois counties passed resolutions "in fervent support of the war and in wrathful denunciation of the 'treasonable assaults of guerillas at home; party demagogues; slanderers of the President, defenders of the butchery at the Alamo, traducers of the heroism at San Jacinto.'" Lincoln's defamers went so far as to state that "Henceforth will this Benedict Arnold of our district be known here only as the Rancho Spotty of one term." The Illinois Democrats as expected made the most of this political ammunition.

Most certainly Lincoln was dismayed and except to Herndon, he made only one explanation of his course in regard to his opposition to the war. This came about after the Rev. J. M. Peck's Belleville oration celebrating the first anniversary of the battle of Buena Vista. The Rev. Mr. Peck was a prominent Baptist clergyman of St. Clair County, Illinois.

In his letter to Peck, dated March 21, 1848, Lincoln reasserted the main points of his speech of January 12th. The Illinois Congressman presented what he considered facts, facts, facts and concluded that "if you admit that they are facts, then I shall be obliged for a reference to any law of language, law of states, law of nations, law of morals, law of religion — any law human or divine, in which an authority can be found for saying those facts constitute 'no aggression.'"

Perhaps historians have had a tendency to over-emphasize Lincoln's so-called political collapse following his congressional term because of the Herndon volumes. The fact that the law partner differed from Lincoln on the Mexican question does not go unnoticed in the Herndon-Weik *Life of Lincoln*. It is hard to comprehend how Lincoln could have been so devoid of Illinois political friends, particularly Whigs as Herndon would lead us to believe.

It appears that in Illinois Whig caucuses in the early 1840s, a rather vague agreement was reached that such leaders of the party of John J. Hardin, Edward D. Baker, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen T. Logan who wished to serve in Congress should follow the slogan "Turn about is fair play." Lincoln had had his turn, and it was fortunate that he had publicly announced that he would not be a candidate to succeed himself.

It was now Logan's turn to run on Lincoln's record in the Seventh District, and on August 7, 1848 he was defeated by Thomas L. Harris, the Democratic candidate who received a majority of 106 votes. The Whig majority in 1846, when Lincoln was elected, was 1,511. Apparently, most of the veterans of the Mexican war voted at the polls in 1848.

Lincoln, who would serve in Congress until March 4, 1849, now worked aggressively in the field of national politics and for the promotion of the Whig candidacy of Zachary Taylor, the popular hero who had made such an enviable reputation in the Mexican War. (See *Lincoln Lore* No. 855, "The Spot Resolutions," August 27, 1945.)

Lincoln And The Theatre

Editor's Note: On January 30, 1968 The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company sponsored the CBS televised Inaugural Program at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. The opening of the restored theatre was in a sense a premiere because no dramatic presentation has been offered at Ford's in more than one hundred years. The program, other than entertainment, was a report of an historic occasion, and a televised performance of *A President's Cabinet Evening*. This was a gala affair for which The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company could be proud in that the company's Foundation contributed \$250,000 as a challenge grant to the Ford Theatre Society for the presentation on that stage of historical plays (plays about Lincoln, plays of the Civil War period and plays which Lincoln witnessed) for many theatrical seasons to come. The National Repertory Theatre Foundation has set up a special resident company at Ford's, and the season began on February 12th with the presentation of *John Brown's Body* by Stephen Vincent Benet. In providing some of the publicity for the inaugural program, the editor prepared a short feature story entitled "Lincoln And The Theatre."

R. G. M.

Was Lincoln "hopelessly stage-struck?" True, in Illinois he witnessed a play or two by traveling theatrical groups, attended a few minstrel shows, was sometimes among those who applauded visiting elocutionists, was seen occasionally at church entertainments and was captivated with the wonders of the magic lantern. But, certainly, he knew very little about the theatre during the period of his married life in Springfield.

However, in Washington, D.C. President Lincoln frequently attended the theatre. Leonard Grover, a capital city theatre proprietor, stated that Abraham Lincoln during the four years of his administration visited his theatre more than a hundred times. While this statement may be an exaggeration, we do know that Lincoln attended ten of the four hundred and ninety-five performances offered by the Ford's Theatre management during the period of 1862 to 1865. From newspaper reports and reliable witnesses we can pinpoint about fifty different occasions when Lincoln visited the theatre to see some of the greatest theatrical talent that ever graced the American stage. Considerable additional evidence can be produced to indicate that his attendance at other times in Washington theatres escaped the attention of the newspaper reporters.

After Lincoln's inauguration as

President, no record of his attendance at a Washington theatre has been found for the critical months of 1861. Perhaps one reason for Lincoln's lack of interest in the theatre during the early months of his administration was the death of his son Willie in February 1862. Also, during that period, there were not many show houses in Washington given over to the "legitimate drama." Mr. Lincoln did not enjoy vaudeville and was said to have visited the Canterbury Hall, the variety house, on only two occasions.

As the legitimate theatre enjoyed boom times during the Civil War, two new theatres opened for business. The one theatre already an established institution in the city was the Washington, located on Eleventh Street near C. It was usually crowded and uncomfortable, and it was noted for its indifferent productions. John T. Ford opened a theatre called the Washington Athenaeum on Tenth Street near E, which was destroyed by fire. Out of the ruins of the Athenaeum, he built the new Ford Theatre which opened its doors on August 27, 1863.

During the Buchanan Administration the Old National Theatre burned, and out of its rubble sprang the New National Theatre, just off Pennsylvania Avenue (near Willard's Hotel) which was opened for business on April 22, 1862, under the management of Leonard Grover.

As the Civil War slowly wore on, and as Lincoln found the theatre relaxing, his attendance increased. Grover stated that "He often came alone, but many times brought his little son Tad, and on special occasions Mrs. Lincoln." The President was very fond of Edwin Booth (the assassin's elder brother) upon the stage, and he usually went to see him perform when the actor was in Washington. Lincoln once made the statement, after witnessing "The Merchant of Venice," that "it was a good performance but I had a thousand times rather read it at home if it were not for Booth's playing."

Lincoln's attendance at theatres presenting Shakespearean plays increased his understanding of the comedies and tragedies in actual production. He witnessed John B. McCullough in the role of Edgar in the play "King Lear," E. L. Davenport and J. W. Wallack in "Othello," James H. Hackett as Falstaff in "Henry IV" parts I and II, and "The Merry Wives of Windsor."

Other notable actors and actresses Lincoln saw in historic roles during his life time were Joseph Jefferson III, William E. Burton, Clara Louise Kellogg, Mrs. John Wood, Barney Williams, Maggie Mitchell, Edwin Forrest, Felicitia Vestvali, Charlotte Cushman and Laura Keane.

Of all the Presidents, Lincoln is most closely associated with the theatre — largely because of his assassination at Ford's Theatre on April 14, 1865.

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Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Arnold Gates, 289 Hyde Park Road, Garden City, New York; Carl Haverlin, 8619 Louis Avenue, Northridge, California; E. B. Long, 708 Kenilworth Ave. Oak Park, Ill.; Ralph Newman, 18 E. Chestnut Street, Chicago, Ill.; Dr. Kenneth A. Bernard, Boston University, Boston, Mass.; James T. Hickey, Illinois State Historical Library, Centennial Bldg., Springfield, Ill.; Judge Warren L. Jones, U. S. Court of Appeals, Jacksonville, Fla.; Hon. Fred Schwengel, 636 Union Arcade, Davenport, Iowa. New Items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

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Pamphlet, paper, 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", (5) pp., illus.

- HECKMAN, RICHARD ALLEN** 1967-10
Lincoln vs Douglas/The Great Debates Campaign/By Richard Allen Heckman/Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C. [Copyright 1967 by Public Affairs Press, 419 New Jersey Avenue, S. E., Washington, D.C. 20003]

Book, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", cloth, v p., 192 pp. illus., price \$5.00. (Includes bibliographical references.)

- ILLINOIS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY** 1967-11
A Portion of That Field/ (device) /The Centennial of the Burial of Lincoln/University of Illinois Press/ (device) /Urbana, Chicago, and London, 1967. [Copyright by Illinois State Historical Society 1967 — Civil War Centennial Commission of Illinois]

Book, cloth, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 6", 97 pp., price \$3.50.

- JUDSON, CLARA INGRAM** 1967-12
(device) /Abraham Lincoln/by Clara Ingram Judson/Illustrated by Polly Jackson/Follett Publishing Company/Chicago. [1967 reprint of 1961 Copyright by Follett Publishing Co. See 1961-57.]

Brochure cloth, 8" x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", 29 (2) pp., illus., price \$1.00. (A Beginning-to-Read Book for children.)

- LEWIS, EDWARD AND JACK BELCK** 1967-13

The Living Words/of Abraham Lincoln/Selected Writings/of a Great President/with a Foreword by/Carl Sandburg/ (device) /Hallmark Editions. [Edited by Edward Lewis and Jack Belck. Copyright by Hallmark Cards, Inc. 1967. Printed in U.S.A.]

Brochure, stiff boards, 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ ", 62 pp., illus., price \$2.50. [Illustrations from collection of Bernard H. Hall, Topeka, Kansas.]

- LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY** 1967-14

Lincoln Herald/Index/Vol. 68/Spring, 1966 through Winter, 1966/Compiled by Gary R. Planck/Edited by Wayne C. Temple/Lincoln Memorial University Press/Harrogate, Tennessee/1967. [Cover title]

Pamphlet, 10" x 7 $\frac{1}{8}$ " 14 pp.

- LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY** 1967-15

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Spring, 1967/Vol. 69, No. 1/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical research in the field of Lincolnia and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in -American Education. [Harrogate, Tennessee]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 10" x 7", 48 pp., illus., price per single issue, \$1.00.

- LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY** 1967-16

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Summer, 1967/Vol. 69, No. 2/Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolnia and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American/Education. [Harrogate, Tennessee]

Pamphlet flexible boards, 10" x 7", pages 51-104, illus., price per single issue, \$1.00.

- PHILLIPS, RICHARD** 1967-17

Iliniwek/Accounts of the history, science and people of the great midwest/Volume 5 September — October — 1967 Number 4 (picture). [Cover title]

Folder, paper, 18" x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", pages 27-32, illus.

- RUEWELER, EUGENE F.** 1967-18

Christ and Lincoln/By/Pastor Eugene F. Rueweler/First Printing. [1967]

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", 9 pp.

- TEMPLE, WAYNE C.** 1967-19

Lincoln and Bennett:/The Story of a Store Account/By Wayne C. Temple. [Cover title] (Reprinted from Fall, 1967 issue of *Lincoln Herald*.)

Pamphlet, paper, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ ", (9) pp., illus.

- THOMPSON, H. KEITH JR. AND CHARLES HAMILTON** 1967-20

Sale No. 22/Comprising the world-famous Lincoln Collection/of Justin G. Turner/The Waldorf-Astoria, October 25, 1967 — 7:30 P.M. [Caption title]

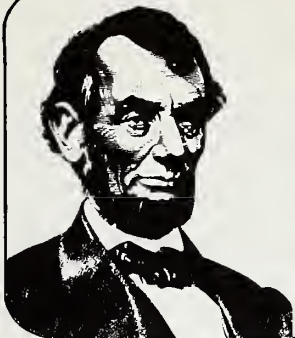
Brochure, flexible boards, 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 6", 71 pp., illus.

McMurtry's Speaking Itinerary

1968

South Bend, Indiana	Jan. 10 & 11
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	Jan. 17 & 18
Kansas City, Kansas	Jan. 19 (20, 21) 22
Little Rock, Arkansas	Feb. 1 & 2
Memphis, Tennessee	Feb. 5 & 6
Chattanooga, Tennessee	Feb. 7 & 8
Charlotte, N. Carolina	Feb. 9 (10, 11) 12
Cincinnati, Ohio	Feb. 13 & 14
Youngstown, Ohio	Feb. 15 & 16
Akron, Ohio	Feb. 19 & 20
Canton, Ohio	Feb. 21 & 22
Cleveland, Ohio	Feb. 26 & 27

Those persons interested in learning of the schedule in detail in the various cities named above, may contact the general agency offices of The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company.



Lincoln Lore

June, 1976

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation...Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor. Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1660

DID LINCOLN CAUSE LOGAN'S DEFEAT?

Until the birth of the Republican party, Illinois was a Democratic state. When Abraham Lincoln served in the United States House of Representatives (1847-1849), he was the lone Whig from Illinois, and his Seventh Congressional District gained the reputation of being the banner Whig district in the state. In the next Congress, Illinois again sent only one Whig, but this man, Lincoln's friend Edward D. Baker, won in another district. The Seventh fell to the Democrats in the congressional election following Lincoln's election. Another friend of Abraham Lincoln, former law partner Stephen Trigg Logan, was the Whig candidate who went down to defeat in the Seventh Congressional District, and many historians have said that the burden of Congressman Lincoln's unpopular record of opposition to the Mexican War doomed Logan's chance of victory.

The dates involved in this problem are confusing to the modern reader and should be explained here before discussing the election. Doubtless many a modern voter gasped when television announcers reported, along with the results of the recent Presidential primary in Pennsylvania, that there were no less than twenty-two primaries to go before the November elections. Nineteenth-century American voters experienced a similarly endless churning of the political cauldron every year. There were no Presidential primaries, of course, but election dates were not systematized and elections were occurring at all times somewhere in the United States. The elections

The Field of Waterloo is ours!



THE WHIG CITADEL TAKEN!

The "Dead District" Redeemed!!

HARRIS ELECTED!!!

STATE REGISTER OFFICE, AUGUST 9.

It affords us heart-felt gratification to announce to our friends that the "dead district" is redeemed from the thralldom of whigery. Nobly have our friends performed their duty and most nobly have their gallant exertions been repaid! We can say no more now, but give a statement of the majorities below, which the official returns will not materially change. Huzza for Cass and Butler, Harris and Victory!!

	Harris.	Logan.
Putnam, - - - -	20 maj.	—
Marshall, - - - -	96	—
Woodford, - - - -	190	—
Tazewell, - - - -	—	200 maj.
Logan, - - - -	—	10
Mason, - - - -	116	—
Menard, - - - -	76	—
Sangamon, - - - -	—	263
Morgan, - - - -	64	—
Scott, - - - -	63	—
Cass, - - - -	7	—
	632	473

Harris' majority 159!!

which sent Lincoln and his colleagues to the House of Representatives were held over a period of a year and three months. Lincoln's was one of the earliest. He was elected early in August of 1846, but he did not take his seat in the House until December of 1847. Louisiana, by contrast, held its election for representatives to the same Congress in November of 1847, just a month before Congress convened. There were not even standardizations by region. Though Lincoln was elected in August of 1846, neighboring Indiana chose Lincoln's Hoosier colleagues a full year later, in August of 1847.

Stephen Logan's ill-starred election day, then, was August 7, 1848. Three months later Illinois voters returned to the polls to select a President of the United States, either Democrat Lewis Cass or Whig Zachary Taylor. Congressman Abraham Lincoln remained in Washington after Congress adjourned on August 14, 1848, to help the Whig Central Committee with the national Whig campaign. Illinois Whigs chose him as an Assistant Elector on August 23, 1848. This meant that he had been chosen to make speeches in Taylor's behalf in Illinois. Despite the choice as Assistant Elector, Congressman Lincoln remained in Washington throughout August and travelled to Massachusetts in September to campaign for Taylor. Time was growing short to fulfill his duties as Assistant Elector in Illinois, so Lincoln went directly to Albany from Massachusetts, and then to Buffalo, from which he took a steamer across the Great Lakes to Illinois. By October 6, he was delivering a

speech in Chicago. On October 10, 1848, he arrived in Springfield to campaign for Taylor in his own district. By the first week in December, Congressman Lincoln had returned to Washington to attend the short (or lame-duck) session of Congress. This session met before the President (elected in November) took office on March 5, 1849 (normally, the date was March 4, but in 1849 that day was a Sunday and therefore unsuitable for the inaugural ceremonies).

The local Democrats were jubilant when Logan lost to Thomas L. Harris. Immediately, they crowed that Lincoln's record was unpopular with the people of central Illinois. Referring to Lincoln's so-called Spot Resolutions, which had demanded that President Polk point out the specific spot of allegedly American soil on which American blood had been shed to initiate the Mexican War, the *Illinois State Register* claimed that the "spot" was at last "wiped out." "When Lincoln was elected," said the Democratic newspaper, "he made no declaration of principles in regard to the war before the people, as he himself tells us in his first speech in Congress. Therefore the people of the seventh Congressional district are not responsible for the anti-war speeches and anti-war votes" of their Whig congressman. "But," the *Register* went on, "it was otherwise in relation to Logan. He had committed himself in the legislature against the war, and his sentiments were well known to the people, — and they promptly rejected him. This proves that . . . they are patriotic, true lovers of their country."

Abraham Lincoln did not interpret the results that way, of course. Writing on August 28, 1848, to William Schouler, the editor of the Boston *Daily Atlas*, Lincoln said:

I would rather not be put upon explaining how Logan was defeated in my district. In the first place I have no particulars from there, my friends, supposing I am on the road home, not having written me. Whether there was a full turn out of the voters I have as yet not learned. The most I can now say is that a good many Whigs, without good cause, as I think, were unwilling to go for Logan, and some of them so wrote me before the election. On the other hand Harris was a Major of the war, and fought at Cerro Gordo, where several Whigs of the district fought with him. These two facts and their effects, I presume tell the whole story. That there is any political change against us in the district I cannot believe; because I wrote some time ago to every county of the district for an account of changes; and, in answer I got the names of four against us, eighty-three for us. I dislike to predict, but it seems to me the district must and will be found right side up again in November.

In a debunker's rush to judgment, historians have called this letter evasive and concluded that Lincoln was the cause of Logan's defeat.

"In the Seventh District," Albert Beveridge declared flatly, "Logan ran on Lincoln's record and was badly beaten." It "would have hurt Logan had he taken the stump for him at that time; for, . . . Lincoln's popularity at home had been seriously impaired, if indeed it were not for the moment destroyed." His reception when he did come to work for Taylor was, according to Beveridge, dismal:

Finally he reached home, but no mention of his arrival was made in any paper. What further part he took in the campaign in Illinois does not appear, except that at one meeting in a small town in Sangamon County, just before the Presidential election, the crowd was unfriendly and a Democratic speaker handled him roughly. As we have seen, Logan had been overwhelmed in the August elections. The result of Lincoln's first session in Congress had been a political revolution among his constituents, and, . . . he returned to Washington a dispirited man.

The atmosphere of rejection and isolation which Beveridge conjured up by saying that Lincoln's arrival went unnoticed, that only one recorded speech was made (and that in a

"small" town), and that Lincoln was "a dispirited man" became even more pronounced in Donald W. Riddle's *Congressman Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957). He called the election "the ultimate repudiation of Lincoln's stand on the Mexican War—not by Democrats only, as might have been expected, but by Whigs." Although Riddle noted that Lincoln made many speeches for Taylor after his return to Illinois and the Seventh Congressional District (these had somehow escaped Beveridge's notice), he read political disaster into their reception. After giving two speeches near Springfield (in Jacksonville and Petersburg, the county seats respectively of Morgan and Menard Counties), Lincoln "beat a strategic retreat," concluding "that no good purpose was served by his continuing to speak in this part of the district." Riddle added:

What is most curious of all he made no speech in Springfield. The conclusion is inescapable. Lincoln was so unpopular in Springfield and its environs that although he was an official party spokesman it was inadvisable for him to speak there.

Lincoln left for the northern part of the district where third-party Free Soil sentiment was strong.

Why did Lincoln retreat from the Springfield area? This is Riddle's explanation:

. . . he made only two speeches in his home neighborhood. In these he was roughly handled. He spoke at Beardstown on October 19. Two days later he spoke in Jacksonville. There his platform opponent, Murray McConnel, attacked Lincoln for his war attitude, asserting that Lincoln had misrepresented his constituents. Lincoln was sufficiently stung to reply. He refused to believe that a majority of his constituents had favored the war. This was an extremely vulnerable defense, and McConnel pounced upon it: how, then, did Lincoln explain his party's defeat in the recent Congressional election? The *State Register* was informed by its Jacksonville correspondent that Lincoln was "used up" by McConnel. "Lincoln has made nothing by coming to this part of the country to make speeches," the Morgan County writer concluded.

Lincoln spoke in Petersburg, the county seat of Menard County while attending court there on October 23. This time the *State Register* claimed he was "used up" by William Ferguson. It appears that Lincoln concluded that no good purpose was served by his continuing to speak in this part of the district.

Riddle judged that Lincoln had very little clout in the north as well:

It was no encomium of his success as an Assistant Elector [that Illinois went for Cass instead of Taylor]. The vote in Putnam County [in the northern part of Lincoln's district] was despite his major argument—that slavery restriction would be furthered by electing Taylor. In view of what had occurred in Jacksonville and Petersburg Lincoln could not easily have concluded that he had won many votes for his candidate.

It should make us suspicious to find the same conclusions buttressed by the opposite evidence. Beveridge's claim that Lincoln was unpopular was based on Lincoln's delivering so few speeches for Taylor in his district. Riddle found that Lincoln did deliver many speeches in his district but concluded, if anything more tenaciously, that Lincoln was unpopular with his own constituents.

To cling to Beveridge's conclusion, then, Riddle had to do two things. First, he had to say that the speeches which newspapers reported were reported unfavorably. Second, he had to say that the unreported speeches had no political effect or the opposite political effect from that intended by Lincoln. Thus the reader learns that Lincoln was "used up" at Beardstown and Jacksonville and that he failed to stem the Free Soil tide in the north, especially in Putnam County.

The first contention is based on a hostile witness; Riddle referred to reports of speeches in Democratic newspapers. Democratic newspapers *without exception* reported that Whig speakers were "used up" by Democratic ones; Whig papers always found precisely the opposite to be the case. It was Lincoln's misfortune that only the Democratic report of his speech survived.

Riddle could still plead that he used the *only* evidence available. Such would also be his plea in the case of the speeches in the northern part of the district. There are no reports, hostile or friendly, of these speeches, so the historian must rely on the only evidence available: the results on election day as ascertained from the election statistics. The figures for the two elections are printed below:

CONGRESSIONAL (AUGUST) PRESIDENTIAL (NOVEMBER)

COUNTY	HARRIS (Dem.)	LOGAN (Whig)	CASS (Dem.)	TAYLOR (Whig)	VANBUREN (Free Soil)
Cass	656	650	724	761	11
Logan	399	417	369	465	4
Marshall	341	244	322	304	41
Mason	452	336	403	391	7
Menard	648	570	488	605	1
Morgan	1,322	1,264	1,309	1,372	139
Putnam	238	219	185	266	299
Sangamon	1,386	1,649	1,336	1,943	47
Scott	662	616	649	798	15
Tazewell	678	899	593	1,097	96
Woodford	419	231	309	166	52
	7,201	7,095	6,687	8,168	712

Lincoln did not stem the Free Soil tide in Putnam County, which went for Van Buren. However, it should be noted that all the northern counties, Putnam, Woodford, and Marshall, had the Free Soil virus, that Lincoln visited *all* of them as well as Tazewell, that Marshall and Woodford went for Cass by smaller majorities than they had gone for Harris, and that Tazewell went for Taylor by a much greater majority than it had turned out for Logan. In other words, it seems only fair to say that, whereas Lincoln may not have helped much in Putnam, he certainly did not hurt anything in Tazewell, Marshall, or Woodford.

It also seems fair to apply the same test of election results to Lincoln's speeches which were reported as disasters by the Democratic press. The fullest report stemmed from the Jacksonville speech, which was reported in this way by the *Illinois State Register*:

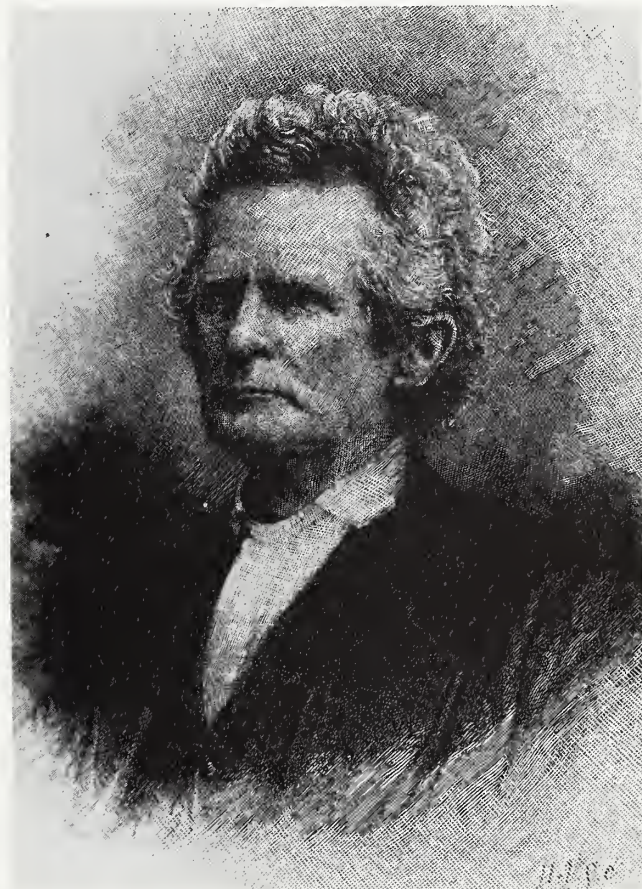
Mr. McConnel then took up a copy of the journal of the House of Representatives of Congress, of January last, and showed that Mr. Lincoln *had refused to vote for a resolution of thanks to General Taylor and his brave comrades for his and their conduct at the battle of Beuna Vista, until he had first voted an amendment thereto*, that this battle was fought in a war *unconstitutionally and unnecessarily* begun by the President. He then turned to Mr. Lincoln and compared his conduct in that vote with his conduct and speeches in favor of the war, and for carrying it on with spirit and vigor before he left home and while canvassing for the office of representative in Congress. He asked if Mr. Lincoln did not know when he gave that vote that he was *misrepresenting* the wishes of the patriotic people of this district, and did he do so by the influence of Mr. Polk or some whig leader. In the midst of the shower of fire that fell around him, Lincoln cried out, "No, I did not know it, and don't believe it yet." As quick as thought McConnel pointed to the August election as an evidence that he had so misrepresented his people, and to that most foul slander upon our district was mainly owing Logan's defeat for Congress. The people were tired of having their patriotism and love of country so shamefully misrepresented by whig Congress-

man and misunderstood by the American people, and they rose in their might and cast aside the men that disregarded the wishes of those who put them in power. Lincoln crouched in silence beneath the blows that fell thick and fast around him, and his friends held down their heads in shame.

Lincoln has made nothing by coming to this part of the country to make speeches. He had better have stayed away. Riddle agreed in substance with the Democrats, though not to the extent of saying that a "shower of fire" fell around Lincoln or that he "crouched in silence."

What, though, would happen if one applied the same test to this speech that is used for Lincoln's northern tour? Jacksonville was in Morgan County. The Whigs always had factional problems in Morgan. It was the only possible challenger to Sangamon's leadership in the Seventh Congressional District, turning out only about 350 - 500 fewer votes than Sangamon's whopping 3,000 or so votes. When Harris beat Logan in August, Morgan County, which had gone for Clay over Polk in 1844, went for the Democrat by 58 votes. Lincoln visited Morgan, and it went for Taylor by 63 votes in November. It would be a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy to say Lincoln caused the change, but it at least deserves mention and the same weight assigned to the vote in Putnam after Lincoln's appearance in that county.

Ignoring all partisan evidence from Democratic newspapers and disregarding the charges of Beveridge and Riddle, one could draw a very different picture of Lincoln's relation-

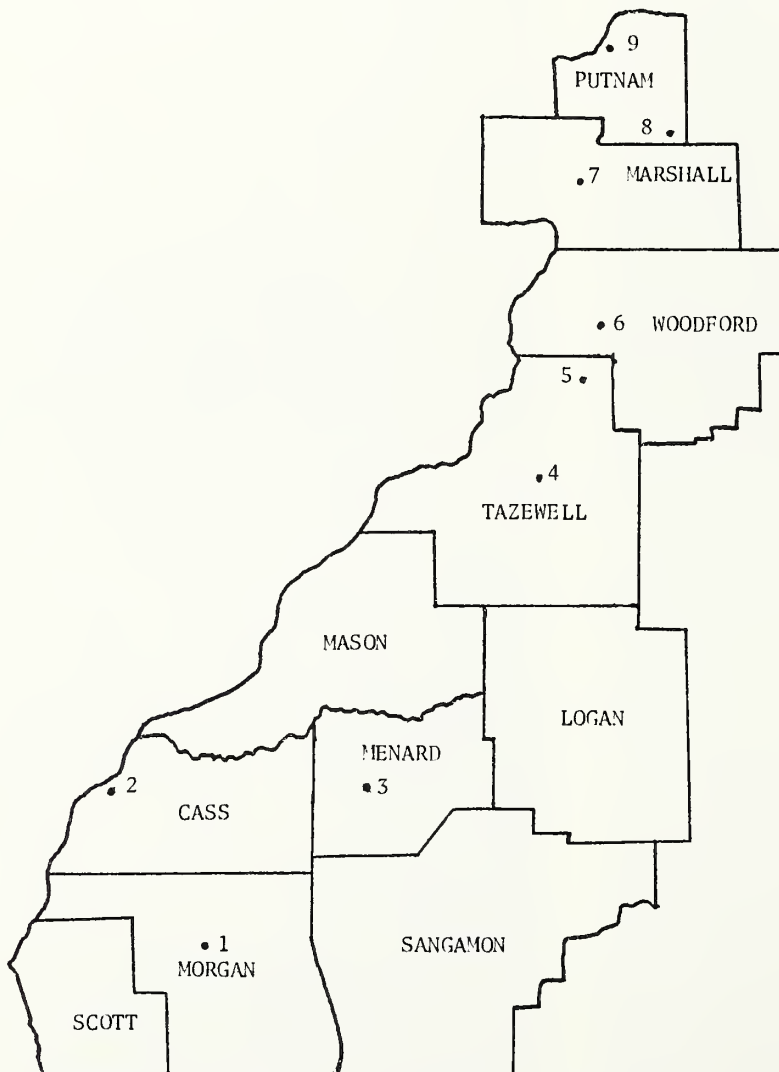


From the Lincoln National Life Foundation
Stephen T. Logan was, according to William Herndon, "small—short—thin—and squarely put up and angularly built, running in figure and features to sharp keen points, lance like . . . He is frailly built—a froth network—nervous—quick—uneasy—restless . . . his voice is sharp and shrill—'squeaky & squeaky.'"

ship with his constituents. Stephen T. Logan lost the congressional election in August to war hero Thomas L. Harris. Thinking him on his way after Congress recessed on the 14th, local Whigs chose incumbent Congressman Abraham Lincoln on August 27 as Assistant Elector to make speeches in November for Zachary Taylor. Lincoln chose to work for the national campaign first and then came home in October to help out the Taylor cause in his own district. He made about eight speeches in Taylor's behalf in the district. Every county except Woodford that Lincoln visited turned out more Whig voters for Taylor than it had for Logan three months earlier. This is not necessarily proof of Lincoln's prowess as a campaigner, but it is proof of his political acumen. He had predicted in August that the upset of Logan by Harris did not indicate any permanent reversal of political fortunes for the

Seventh District's Whig majority. He knew and stated flatly that the district would be found in Taylor's column in November. What role his own speaking efforts played in this is impossible to determine, but they could hardly have been a detriment.

It is even harder to say what role Lincoln's reputation played in Logan's defeat than to say what role his presence and political activity played in Taylor's victory in the Seventh Congressional District. All that can be said, within the confines of *Lincoln Lore's* limited pages, is that there is no indication that Lincoln's physical presence in the district had any dampening effect on Whig political fortunes in October or November, 1848. One must wonder, then, how Lincoln could have been more dangerous to Whig success just three months earlier while he was hundreds of miles away in Washington.



THE SEVENTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Lincoln Campaign Speeches for Taylor, October, 1848

1. Jacksonville (MORGAN)
2. Beardstown (CASS)
3. Petersburg (MENARD)
4. Tremont (TAZEWELL)
5. Washington (TAZEWELL)
6. Metamora (WOODFORD)
7. Lacon (MARSHALL)
8. Magnolia (PUTNAM)
9. Hennepin (PUTNAM)

LINCOLN AS A CRITIC IN WARTIME.

Libertyville, Ill., Feb. 9.—As Lincoln's birthday approaches I am reminded that our greatest American President was at one time very critical of one of our war Presidents and his administration. During the Mexican war Lincoln, a member of the house of representatives, introduced resolutions questioning the President's statements that Mexican troops had invaded our soil, and challenged the President to tell at what spot the alleged invasion had taken place. In January, 1848, he made a speech on these resolutions before the house. Furthermore, in the same session of congress he voted for an amendment to a bill, which amendment declared that the Mexican war was "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally commenced by the President."

With such an example of plain speaking, and from such an exalted source, before us, let us hope there will be more criticism, on any and every subject, limited only by considerations of truth and validity. We needn't worry about giving information to the enemy, since the enemy probably already knows more about American military and diplomatic affairs than the American public does. It is the crass blundering and inefficiency in strategy and statesmanship that aid the enemy, not their discussion.

ALBERT F. DALLIN.

